2: Stefansson--22 (1908-1912) 1914 Copper Eskimo
116, 316, 326

"It is naturally difficult for the natives to cut the native copper where it occurs in huge masses or as an outcrop and most of the material actually used for knives and other things is picked up in the form of small fragments along the banks of the rivers. Smelting is quite unknown and nothing is ever done with the copper except to pound it with stones and to sharpen the edges of cutting tools by grinding them against rough stones."

2: Stefansson--113 (1908-12) 1914 Copper Eskimo
116, 438, 316

"As has been pointed out above, the Haneragmiut receive copper and caribou skins from the north and articles of wood from the south and these act as go-betweens for the Haneragmiut and Akuliakattagmiut. Their only peculiar local resource is that there are some deposits of iron pyrites, a substance that is universally used by the Copper Eskimo in kindling fire, and this they sell to many of the surrounding tribes."

3: Rasmussen--71-72 (c. 1923) 1932 Copper Eskimo
116, 101, 135, 316, 328

"When dealing with the various tribal groups I have already referred to what it was that drove the particularly enterprising out on [72] trading journeys, and what articles of barter could be offered for those one lacked. The whole of the region we have just described had a great and valuable source of wealth in the occurrence of pure copper, both in Bathurst Inlet and some places on Victoria Land, especially on Prince Albert Sound. Of this copper the natives made knives, [illegible]os, ice-picks and harpoon heads, which were highly prized by tribes further away. Diamond Jenness has justly included all these people under the name of The Copper Eskimos."

8: Cadzow--8 (1919) 1920 Copper Eskimo
116, 316

"He [AW: a native informant] stated that the native copper used in making utensils and weapons was usually picked up in the form of float, both on the western side of Victoria Island and along Coppermine river. He also described the primitive native method of copper-working."

412 Two incidents that came directly under my notice in the summer of 1915
322 were fairly typical. A native with whom I was travelling in southwest Victoria Island discovered on the beach a long, nail-studded plank that had presumably fallen overboard from some vessel. He carried it several miles inland to our camp, and there spent half a day splitting it into poles for fish-spear handles, two of which he sold to a kinsman. A few days later another native found a second plank, which he proposed to convert into a sled-runner, and with this purpose in view trimmed it slightly with his hunting knife. After consulting his companions, however, he decided that a new sled-runner was not needed, so he turned the
[239] plank over to his stepfather to fashion into tent-poles. In each case the native split the plank with a crude antler wedge driven home by a boulder.

322 The uses of wood were naturally manifold. From it were made the sled,
[302] the tent-poles, the frame of the kayak, the snow shovel, the table, food trays, and other articles too numerous to mention. Odd chips of wood sometimes
824 served as fuel during the summer months, although the Eskimo preferred
513 heather or willow twigs. Willow twigs had a special use; sewn together in a long strip they provided a mattress to protect the bedskins from the snow.

STONE

333 Stone (apart from native copper) played an astonishingly small rôle in the
[342] economy of the Copper Eskimo. Their winter home was invariably the snow-hut, although their predecessors in the region had dwelt in huts of snow or wood, whose ruins could still be traced in numerous places along the coast. Loose stone boulders held down the edges of the Copper Eskimo tents; pillars of stone (in many cases flat slabs of dolomite easily piled one on top of another) supported kayaks, sleds, and other goods that were temporarily abandoned during the summer months; and heaped-up boulders protected caches of meat or clothes from the ravages of foxes, wolves, and birds; but any real construc-
324 tion in stone was conspicuously lacking. There were no stone knives or adzes,
412 no arrow heads tipped with stone, no stone sinkers for fishing lines or nets, and no stone scrapers for use on wood or hides, although implements of all these types had been used by the earlier inhabitants and were sometimes gathered as curiosities by the Copper Eskimo themselves. There were stone hammers and whetstones, it is true, but these were merely unshaped pebbles picked up when
[415] the need arose and afterwards discarded. In short, stone provided the material
[354] for two objects only, the lamp and the cooking pot; and the stone cooking pot
[177] was discarded soon after our visit in favour of iron vessels brought in from the outside.

135

Figure 1. Lamp of native copper. IV.D.1441. 1/1.

324 These two vessels, the lamp and the cooking pot, were invariably made from
415 soapstone (talc chlorite schist), originally with copper-bladed adzes, but in our
354 time with adzes of iron. Freshly quarried soapstone readily scratches with the
316
[135]

fingernail, so that the labour of manufacturing even a large vessel was comparatively slight, never requiring more than a few days. We saw no pots made of any other material, but from Prince Albert Sound we obtained two lamps, one fashioned from a red sandstone, the other from an igneous rock, that could hardly have been hollowed out with adzes in the ordinary way, but must have been shaped by some pecking and grinding process. Their owners knew nothing about their manufacture, and there is good reason to believe that they were not made by the Copper Eskimo, but came in from Hudson Bay.[1]

As stated in the introduction, the natives considered their amygdaloidal copper,[2] which took the place of stone, bone, or ivory in so many of their implements, as merely a peculiar stone that they could work into shape, cold, by hammering with boulders and pebbles (Figure 1). Whether they were able to drill copper before they obtained iron is uncertain; if so, they must have used stone- or copper-pointed drills. In our time they still retained one or two of these copper-pointed drills, but used them, so far as we observed, only on bone, antler, and wood.

Figure 2. Lamp of galena, used for marking skins. IV.D.300. 1/1.

The only important mineral besides copper was iron pyrites, which the Eskimo gathered mainly in the beds of two streams, Kugaluk River in the southwest of Victoria Island and a creek a few miles east of Coppermine River. There were other sources, however, that I failed to record. This mineral served the natives instead of flint and steel for striking fire. They possessed also a few fragments of galena (Figure 2) and litharge, which they used for marking skin and wood; the galena came mostly from Galena Point in Bathurst Inlet, but the source, or sources, of the litharge is not known.

BONE, ANTLER, HORN, IVORY

The caribou and the musk-ox supplied nearly all the bone that the Copper Eskimo required, although for shoeing the runners of their sleds they used rib bones from occasional whales that drifted up on their shores. There was hardly a bone in the two land animals that could not be turned to some purpose. Leg bones were in special demand for skin stretchers, for needle-cases, and for sheathing the wooden ends of harpoon shafts; another type of skin stretcher was fashioned from a caribou or musk-ox shoulder blade. The ribs served for handles of various kinds, for small toggles, pins, and bows for the drilling set. Other toggles were made from the breast or pelvic bones, and the astragalus provided a ready made mouthpiece for the drill.

The caribou alone provided antler, which was just as useful as bone, and interchangeable with that material for most purposes. On the other hand, ivory, which Eskimo elsewhere often substituted for bone and antler, was extremely rare, because neither the narwhal nor the walrus frequents the waters adjacent to the Copper Eskimo territory; consequently, the few ivory objects we saw among the natives almost certainly reached them by trade from the east or the west. Sheep likewise were absent, so that all the horn in use came from the musk-ox. This horn sometimes took the place of bone or antler, but it was especially prized for the manufacture of ladles, scoops, drinking horns, toggles for the sled, and hammers for pounding blubber.

Originally the Copper Eskimo used only four tools, all with copper blades, for shaping bone, antler, and horn, viz., the adze, the whittling knife, the grooving

[1] See p. 68.
[2] For the sources of this copper see Reports of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, vol. XII, pt. A, p. 58; vol. XI, pt. A, p. 58 of seq.

CHAPTER III

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE

FIRE-MAKING

372 The Copper Eskimo were familiar with the method of making fire by means of the thong drill, but rarely practised it because it involved strenuous labour and suitable wood was rare. The handles of some of their whittling knives and other tools had small holes to fit the top of the spindle, for a man pressing down with both hands could exert greater force than was obtainable with the usual drill mouthpiece. Figure 46 shows the hearth of an old fire-making apparatus; the specimen was discovered on the beach at Kater Point, close to Bathurst Inlet.

372 316 The ordinary method of making fire was by striking together two pieces of iron pyrites, for which there were several sources around Coronation Gulf, the two best known being Kugaluk River, which flows down from the Colville Hills in southwest Victoria Island into the sea behind Cape Kendall, and a small river a few miles east of Coppermine River. The pyrites was occasionally covered with sealskin or caribou skin to protect the hand.

372 237 415 824 The spark was caught in willow catkins contained in a small disk-shaped bag of sealskin closed with a circular lid of the same material (Figure 47). A little blowing soon spread the glow over a large surface so that it could ignite a lamp-stick or a bunch of matted moss roots dipped in blubber. To foment a flame, however, most Eskimo kept a little stock of dry grass, which, like the lamp-wick of eriophorum seed, they carried in small bags made from the lining around the heart of some animal (Figure 48), from the skin on a loon's foot (Figure 49), or from caribou or marmot fur.

Figure 46. Wooden hearth of fire drill. IV.D.319. 2/3.

LAMPS

354 Many writers have stressed the fundamental importance of the Eskimo blubber lamp, without which the natives could not have survived along the northern coast-line. 178 Although in certain regions they have now adopted substitutes such as stearin candles, coal-oil lamps, wood stoves, and primus stoves, throughout large parts of the Arctic the blubber lamp still holds its own.

Porsild[1] states that "In Arctic regions proper, train-oil is the only fuel, and there the lamps are large; where other fuel —heather, wood, peat or coal—is available, either the whole year round or only in the summer, the lamp used for burning blubber oil loses its importance as a heater, and is used

[1] Porsild, Morten P.: The Material Culture of the Eskimo in West Greenland; Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. LI, p. 218.

I know of only one source for this material that is used at the present time by the Copper Eskimo, Port Epworth at the mouth of Tree River in Coronation Gulf where the talc chlorite schist occurs as an inclusion in the granite. It is very coarse in texture, and of a pale grey colour, as can be seen in unused specimens or by fracturing an old one.

Nevertheless, there seem once to have been other sources. An old woman who lived at the east end of Coronation Gulf told me that long ago her people used to make lamps and pots from stone obtained in a quarry on Rae River. An early explorer, John Rae, did find soapstone at the fall 10 miles from the mouth of this river,[1] but only in thin beds, which might explain why the Eskimo ceased to use this source. Then again, I purchased from a Coronation Gulf native a little toy lamp of typical Copper Eskimo shape (Figure 50), which was certainly not made from the Port Epworth soapstone, for it is much finer in texture and of a pale green colour. In the same region I obtained also an unfinished implement, resembling an imitation lance-head, which was made from a very similar soapstone, but is yellowish green. Finally, from the west coast of Hudson Bay, probably from Chesterfield Inlet, the museum has a toy lamp (IV.C.165) that resembles in colour, texture, and graining the green toy lamp bought in Coronation Gulf; in shape and dimensions the two are practically identical except that the Hudson Bay specimen has no shelf. Morley E. Wilson, of the Geological Survey, Canada, expressed the opinion that these lamps almost certainly came from the same quarry, because this type of soapstone is exceedingly rare in Canada, and that the implement like a lance-head was also derived from the same locality. It is worth noting that there are deposits of soapstone near the mouth of Back River.

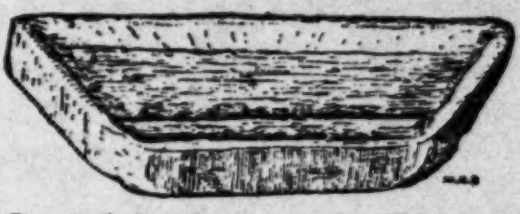

Figure 50. Toy lamp, of pale green soapstone. IV.D.613. 1/1.

Up to a few years ago natives from Dolphin and Union Strait in the west to Amundsen Gulf in the east often migrated to the Port Epworth quarry in the spring of the year in order to manufacture their own lamps and pots. Each family usually made more vessels than it required for its own use in order to have some for barter when it returned home the following autumn or winter.

Women and children often fashioned the smaller lamps and pots. The larger ones were the work of the men, although once they were finished and handed over to the housewife they became her exclusive property. No special skill was required; children 10 years of age could make small lamps just as good as those made by their elders. A little more care was necessary in working at a pot, because the rock, though soft, was somewhat brittle, and the walls and bottom had to be comparatively thin; but even this was not beyond the ability of a child, as it required patience rather than technical skill. With his crude copper tools a native could quarry out his block and make the largest lamp that was ever used in about 3 days, and the largest pot in no more than a day longer; iron tools, of course, appreciably lessened the time. First, he chiselled

[1] Richardson, Sir John: Journal of a Boat Voyage through Rupert's Land, vol. I, p. 313. London, 1851

clear of the solid rock a block equal to the length of the desired lamp or pot, then gradually hewed it into shape and smoothed it all over by rubbing it with any kind of hard, smooth stone. Formerly the copper-bladed ice chisel served for quarrying the block, and the copper-headed adze for shaping it, but in more recent times the Eskimo have used hatchets, geological hammers, and chisels with iron blades.

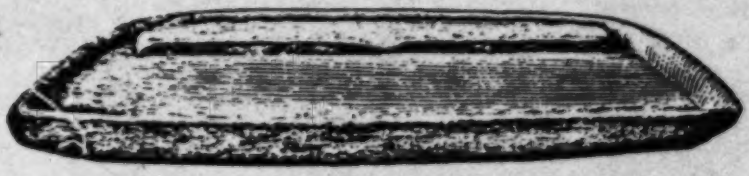

Figure 51. Typical Copper Eskimo lamp. IV.D.657. Approx. 1/8.

The typical Copper Eskimo lamp resembled in shape the lesser segment of a circle in which a large part of the arc was flattened until it was roughly parallel with the sector, whereas the sector itself was very slightly convex. Figure 51 illustrates this general shape. The convexity of the sector was occasionally very marked; and, conversely, the arc was sometimes hardly flattened at all, so that in a few specimens the shape approached an ellipse. The lamp outlined in Figure 52 shows a marked tendency in this direction.

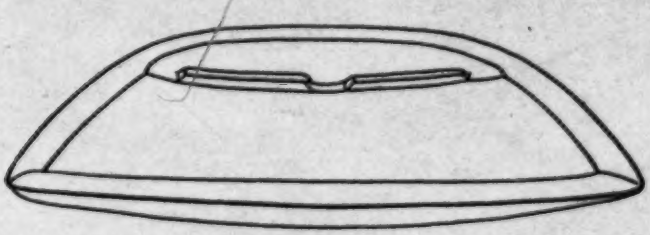

Figure 52. A nearly elliptical lamp. IV.D.651. Approx. 1/8.

The bottom of the lamp was invariably flat. The edges, which were perpendicular, or almost so, on the outside, ranged in thickness from 1½ inches to 3½ inches, and formed a narrow, well-defined rim around the oil well, which comprised the whole body of the lamp hollowed out to a depth of from 1 inch to 1½ inches. The front edge, or lip, sloped down to the well at an angle of around 45 degrees, but elsewhere the edges were practically as perpendicular inside as outside. The well of the lamp was flat like the bottom, not rounded like a saucer. Most lamps were divided into two compartments by a raised ridge parallel to the front and back edges, but very much nearer the back; and the level of the back compartment was nearly always above that of the front, or well proper, thus forming a kind of shelf from which the oil could flow forward through two gaps at the extremities of the dividing ridge, and, in most of the

interesting, because it has been broken across in two places and repaired with six copper bands. Moreover, unlike all the other pots from this region in the possession of the museum, it is made from a biotite chlorite schist. Yet in shape it is almost a duplicate of No. IV.D.676 (Figure 59), the sides in both pots being unusually convex. The latter vessel came from Coppermine River, and is of the usual soapstone (talc chlorite schist) from the quarry near Tree River.

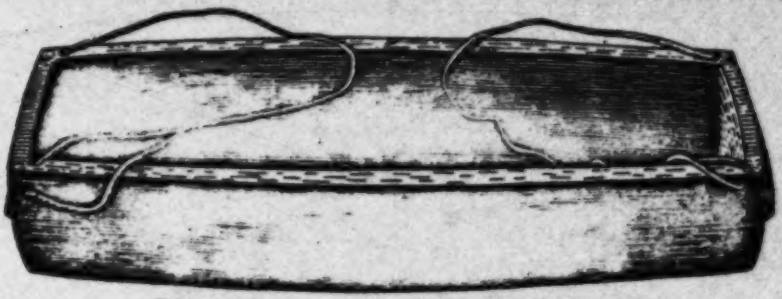

Figure 59. Typical soapstone pot. IV.D.676. Approx. 1/2.

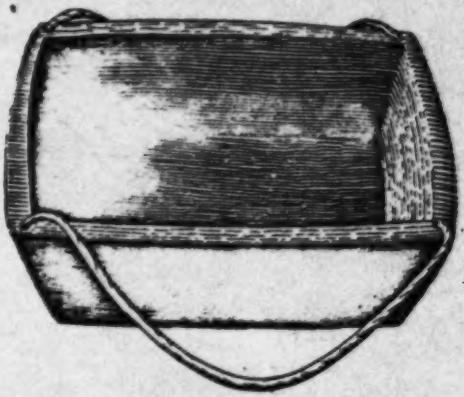

Figure 60. Squarish soapstone pot, now in Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

From an artistic point of view it would seem that the pots of the Eskimo have degenerated during the last 150 years, for Hearne gives a slightly different description of the vessels he saw in the Eskimo encampment at Bloody Fall, near the mouth of Coppermine River. "Some of those kettles are so large as to be capable of containing five or six gallons; and though it is impossible these poor people can perform this arduous work with any other tools than harder stones, yet they are by far superior to any that I had ever seen in Hudson's Bay; every one of them being ornamented with neat mouldings round the rim, and some of the large ones with a kind of flute-work at each corner. In shape they were a long square, something wider at the top than bottom, like a knife-tray, and strong handles of the solid stone were left at each end to lift them up."[1]

[1] Hearne's Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean, edited by J. B. Tyrrell: The Champlain Society, Toronto, 1911, p. 105.

per, or iron. They claimed that their forefathers had never used points of stone and ascribed such specimens as they picked up in their country. (See Figure 155) to a still earlier people. Thus, it would seem that in the short space of 100 years stone points had passed out of both use and memory.

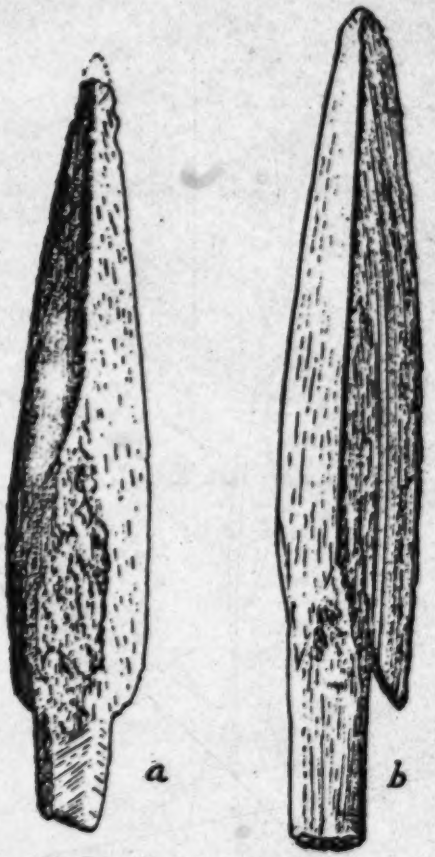

Figure 155. Two rubbed stone points picked up on the surface of the ground in Coronation Gulf. IV.D.907, 1627. 1/1.

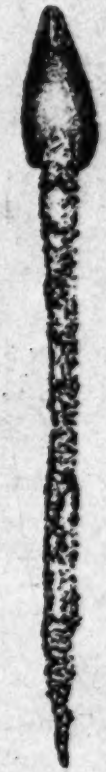

Figure 156. Arrow head, with rubbed slate point, found on Victoria Island. IV.D.1916. Approx. 1/2.

In 1939, Mr. Lincoln Washburn presented to the National Museum of Canada two old slate-pointed arrow heads that had been picked up on Victoria Island.[1] The points were wedged without rivets into rather flat antler fore-shafts, one being at right angles to the axis of the shaft, the other parallel with it. Each shaft bore a single barb and terminated in a sharp tang that seemed to lack knobs, but one shaft had been made from two pieces of antler deftly

[1] He added the information that near Holman Island, at the entrance to Prince Albert Sound, is an outcrop of a slate rock that the natives assert was once used for arrow points and knife blades.